12 March 2024

Reference: WHRGS/GA/RES/77/202

**Call for inputs to inform the report by the Secretary-General on progress towards ending child, early and forced marriage worldwide**

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) presents its compliments to the Permanent Missions to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva and has the honour to refer to General Assembly resolution 77/202 on “Child, early and forced marriage”.

The General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report, based on evidence, before the end of its seventy-eighth session, on progress towards ending child, early and forced marriage worldwide, as well as best practices, using information provided by Member States, United Nations bodies, agencies, funds and programmes, civil society and other relevant stakeholders.

In this regard, OHCHR is seeking inputs from Member States and other stakeholders to inform the preparation of the aforementioned report. OHCHR would appreciate receiving written contributions, comprising replies to the guiding questions in the annex.

Submissions should be received by **15 April 2024** and be:

* Limited to 3000 words;
* Sent by email in Microsoft Word format to **ohchr-registry@un.org** with **ohchr-wohchr@un.org**in CC**,** including in the e-mail subject line: **input to SG report on child, early and forced marriage, pursuant to GA resolution 77/202**;

Submissions will be made publicly available, in full and as received, on the OHCHR website, unless otherwise requested.

Any enquiries may be addressed to Stefania Tripodi at **stefania.tripodi@un.org**

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Permanent Missions to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva the assurances of its highest consideration.

**ANNEX**

Report by the Secretary-General on progress towards ending child, early and forced marriage worldwide

Guiding questions

1. What efforts have been made or are planned to address the recommendations of the latest report of the Secretary-General on the issue of child, early and forced marriage (A/77/282)? Please, provide information, *inter alia*, on measures to:
	1. address the root causes of child, early and forced marriage including social norms, gender inequalities and stereotypes.

Ethiopia has been making an extensive effort to end child, early, and forced marriage by implementing comprehensive prevention and response interventions. The national effort to end child marriage and FGM is guided by the National Costed Roadmap to End Child Marriage and FGM/C (2020-2024) which was launched in 2019 and is under implementation across the country. It is an evidence-based costed roadmap that has clearly articulated social and gender norms as the underlying causes of child marriage and FGM and other critical drivers such as the limited availability of opportunities that resulted in child marriage being a default option for girls. Accordingly, it has identified employing a gender transformative approach that addresses the power dynamics and inequality across the socio-ecological framework.

The following efforts/interventions address the root causes of child, early, and forced marriage including social norms, gender inequalities, and stereotypes.

* **Enhancing the agency of Adolescent Girls** to protect themselves and other fellow girls as well as champion change at the family and community level. The limited capacity and voice of girls is one of the factors that contribute vulnerability of girls. To address this, UNICEF as part of the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage and other programmes supported the government in developing an evidence-based and comprehensive capacity-building manual named Girls Power: Comprehensive Capacity Building Manual for Out-of-school Girls Ages 10-14 and 15-19 to equip out-of-school adolescent girls with the skill and knowledge on various issues pertinent to them and implemented across the country. Similarly, the Ministry of Education and Regional Education Bureaus across the sub-national areas with support from UNICEF and other stakeholders have been implementing life skill education targeting both girls and boys in the school. This has contributed to enhancing the knowledge and efficacy of girls to decline child marriage proposals and seek support from service providers leading to the reporting and cancellation of the increased number of child marriage arrangements. The SBC survey commissioned by UNICEF and other studies vividly showed that girls' agency both in terms of knowledge, efficacy, and taking proactive measures in influencing decisions that affect their lives.

In addition, efforts to strengthen the platforms of adolescent girls including gender clubs have exerted that helped girls to have viable mechanisms for learning and exchange as well as serve as support mechanisms whenever they are at risk of child, early or forced marriage, or other forms of violence. Similarly, an innovative approach of interactive voice response that is a pre-recorded voice message regularly shared via phone has been used to provide training on life skills and provide information on available services in hard-to-reach areas in humanitarian contexts including in IDPs.

* **Families and communities’ engagement:** A range of behaviour and social norms change interventions have been implemented aimed at shifting attitudes and practices. These include a community conversation intervention which brings together key community members to participate in a reflective dialogue where they explore the key beliefs, assumptions, and myths on child marriage via a trained facilitator leading dialogue using a structured toolkit. These community members build consensus during the sessions which ultimately leads to the development of a collective action plan and bylaws that will be publicly announced and implemented to prevent the practice beyond the discussion period. To enhance the quality and effectiveness of this critical intervention, UNICEF as part of the UN GPECM and other programmes supported the development of an evidence-based, comprehensive gender transformative community conversation toolkit comprised of Role Model Academy for Adolescents and Adults as well as a tailored humanitarian version named Safe Space for Change. The other critical initiative taken over the last two years is enhancing the engagement of men and boys as allies to bring change for adolescent girls by changing harmful masculinity and promoting positive ones that contribute to creating an empowering and protective environment for girls and women. To enhance the quality and effectiveness of the interventions and the approach, UNICEF supported the lead ministry in developing an evidence-based and gender transformative capacity building and engagement manual named Empowering Allies: A Manual for Male Engagement to Promote Gender Equality, End Child Marriage, and FGM- Boys Age 10-14, Boys Age 15-19, Men Age 20+ and implementation guide part of the UNJP GPECM programme and other funding supports.

In addition, religious and other community leaders are the gatekeepers of social norms and influence the behaviours and preferences of communities in Ethiopia. At different levels, individual community leaders and their organizations have been capacitated and mobilized to bring changes around child marriage, promotion of girls' education, prevention of various forms of violence, and gender equality broadly. Supporting them to reaffirm their commitment based on the theological reflection and previous public declaration made by faith denominations, developing a communication manual, and supporting them to conduct community-level outreach activities as well as disseminating educational messages using various media have been the focus of the intervention.

Moreover, there were some initiatives implemented to address the economic dimensions of the drivers by ensuring they benefit from national and humanitarian cash support programmes and scholastic material support for girls to continue and re-enroll in their schools.

* **Delivery of tailored services to adolescent girls**: Capacity building of formal and non-formal service delivery points is among the key pillars implemented by different actors as part of the National Costed Roadmap. This includes health, justice, social, child protection, WASH and MHPSS, and other services. To enhance the quality and friendliness of the services, a gender transformative capacity-building approach called social analysis and action has been implemented. The aim was to facilitate the workforce delivering service to assess and critically reflect on the impact of their personal attitude, values, and prejudices in the provision of compassionate prevention and response service delivery.
* **Enhancing the enabling environment**: Strengthening the existing legal framework including the advocacy for the endorsement of the family law in Afar and Somali regions and enforcement of existing laws and policies, tracking of the implementation of the costed roadmap, engaging parliamentarians and members of councils at different level for improved accountability and budget allocation, strengthening coordination among key stakeholders are the key interventions implemented under this pillar.
* **Improved data and evidence:** Various efforts were exerted to increase the availability and quality of data and evidence which inform programming and advocacy efforts. These include SBC surveys focusing on social and gender norms, and KABP surveys among religious leaders, girls, boys, and men. In addition, various efforts were implemented to strengthen the monitoring, evaluation, and learning system of key government sectors working on ending child marriage.
1. ensure access to education, decent work, social protection, and health services, including sexual and reproductive health, for girls and women who are affected or at risk, who are already married or in informal unions, who have fled such a marriage or union, whose marriage has dissolved, and widowed girls or women who were married as girls.

The National Costed Roadmap to End Child Marriage and FGM is a multi-sectoral plan that involves key sectors including education, health, justice, vital Events registration in particular birth and the social sectors via MoWSA and BoWSAs.

As part of this, the following sectors are playing critical roles in their respective mandates that contribute to improved access to various prevention, response, and protection services.

* **Education**: Implementation of gender-responsive pedagogy, delivery of life skill education and campaigns targeting the school community including using the school Mini-Media, availing guidance and counselling services, establishment and strengthening of gender clubs, putting in place school code of conduct and SRGBV handling mechanism, availing suggestion box and other avenues for safe reporting of cases are among critical interventions implemented in the education setting that contribute to the reduction of the risk of child marriage, improve retention and better performance by girls. The back-to-school campaigns, the engagement of PTA and scholastic materials, and availing MHH facilities and dignity kits are among the actions positively contributing to re-enrolment, retention, and performance of girls in their education.
* **Justice:** The legal literacy sessions provided to girls and other community members, and the free legal aid availed for girls and women at risk of violence and subjected to violence including child marriage are among key interventions implemented by the sector.
* **Health**: Contribution to the prevention through the community-level workforce, providing SRH services friendly to girls and age verification to manage cases of child marriage considering the best interest of the child and addressing health complications including Fistula are among the interventions implemented by the sector.
* **Social Protection**: The cash support programmes including those implemented in humanitarian situations and the National Productive Safety Net Programme implemented by the government have contributed to reducing the vulnerability of girls. It has contributed to reducing the economic burden on families and helped in retaining girls in the school as it is a soft conditionality and participation of parents in SBC sessions which include child marriage and FGM. It has contributed to increased awareness and a shift in the practices. The deployment of community service workers to follow up with target families and facilitate linkage with services played a game-changing role in reducing the vulnerability of girls to child marriage as well as continuing their education.
* **BoWSA/MoWSA**: It has rolled out a national case management framework that facilitates the identification of girls at risk and subjected to child marriage and facilitates access to various prevention and response services. The provision of MHPSS services as well as prevention services are provided by the sector. In some areas, there are also shelters where girls who fled from child marriage arrangements stay temporarily until the issue is discussed with their guidance and secure guarantee to ensure the safety of girls when they are reunited with their families.
1. guarantee protection measures, remedies, and support services for victims.

The criminal code has provisions to protect girls at risk or subjected to child marriage. The provision of legal aid and support is part of the responsibility of public prosecutors. This allows girls at risk as well as those subjected to child marriage access protection services.

1. implement child- and gender-responsive budgeting to support effective measures to eradicate child, early, and forced marriage.

Gender budgeting has been one of the initiatives implemented by the government of Ethiopia for several years under the leadership of the Ministry of Finance and key ministries. It has contributed to enhancing improved access, participation, and benefit of girls and women from development initiatives. This is evident in the change in gender parity in school, participation in the workforce, and holding public positions though a lot remains to reach the expected level.

In addition, public finance for children (PF4C) has been one of the critical initiatives implemented with support from UNICEF to various focus areas including ending child marriage and FGM. Capacity-building sessions targeting key government experts and partners have been done on PF4C including undertaking budget and expenditure tracking and development of budget briefs. To this end, tools for data collection, analysis, and compilation of a report have been developed for the ending of child marriage and FGM programmes aligned with the National Costed Roadmap to End Child Marriage and FGM (2020-2024). UNICE supported the undertaking of three expenditure tracking focusing on child marriage and FGM that has shown some improvement in allocation an average of 10 per cent though the net worth in financing interventions was limited due to the unprecedentedly high inflation rate. Similarly, exercise has been done on the broader child protection which revealed that only nearly 1 per cent of the public budget has been invested in child protection.

On the other hand, the findings from these exercises played a critical role in backing the advocacy effort and increased budget allocation. In some regions like the Somali region, it has yielded promising results in an increment of budget allocation for the effort to end child marriage and FGM.

1. What prevention mechanisms have proved effective to eradicate child, early and forced marriage? Please include examples of promising practices and challenges encountered in engaging family members, religious, traditional and community leaders, in raising awareness about, and countering child, early and forced marriage.

Evidence has shown that a mix of evidence-based and complementary interventions that engage various community members including girls, parents, religious leaders, men, and boys contributed to the reduction of vulnerability of adolescent girls. The first and critical one is the community conversation intervention and the inter-generational dialogue facilitated as per the newly redesigned toolkit called Role Model Academy for adults and adults. The other critical intervention was the men and boys’ engagement intervention in a structured session aimed at capacitating them, shifting their attitude, and engaging them as allies to champion change in their families and communities have shown promising results. Some of the promising results include cases of child marriage and an identified, number of girls supported to re-enroll to education. The shift in attitude and practice has been reflected in systematized baseline and end-line assessments conducted in selected sub-national areas.

The other promising interventions were the engagement of religious leaders and their organizations. A KABP baseline and endline survey have been commissioned across 7 sub-national areas that have shown improved results in terms of both shifts in attitudes of religious leaders themselves and their engagement in educating and mobilizing their constituencies.

1. What kind of approaches and tools have been used to collect disaggregated data on child, early and forced marriages, as well as informal unions?

In the last two years, various templates have been developed and customized to gather data on child marriage arrangements. The key parameters covered include cases identified and reported both by formal and non-formal structures, cases prosecuted, and cases convicted. Schools, health facilities, Police, Justice bureaus, Courts from the formal structures, Anti-HTPs Committee, the community Surveillance Mechanism, Women Development Groups, and Girls platforms are the key source of data.

To capture the impact of drought on child marriage, a trend analysis targeting those impacted sub-national areas has been done using admin data gathered and verified by government offices at district and sub-national levels.

1. Have digital technologies and tools been used to address child, early and forced marriage? If so, please share promising practices, challenges and possible solutions.

One of the innovative approaches that uses digital technologies and tools employed as part of the effort to end child, early and forced marriage has been the Interactive Voice Response (IVR). This is a pre-recorded voice message delivered regularly via an ordinary phone and it includes tracking of progress on the KAP of participants. The content was co-created with the girls themselves through a consultative and participatory process and focused on building their life skills and enhancing their knowledge about the drivers and consequences of child marriage and FGM as well as available services. It has shown promising results on the knowledge and shift in attitude as per the results of the baseline and endline assessment. It was critical in reaching girls in challenging contexts, flexibility in terms of the timing of listening to the message and the opportunity for jointly learning with family members also contribute to improving the engagement of girls in transformative discussions at family and community levels. On the other hand, there were challenges in the completion rate due to various reasons including the limited ownership of phones among adolescent girls and the use of other people’s phones made regular participation difficult for girls. Mapping the communities with better access to phones and targeting as well as developing the content in a way that resonates with other members of the family so that they can listen to it together, availing and disseminating the content using various platforms and channels including radio and engaging community volunteers to convene girls to listen collectively as well as opening the sessions for other girls who are beyond the target areas can help to reach girls at scale.

1. Are digitalized birth and marriage registration systems being used in your country, requiring mandatory registration of all births and marriages, including childbirths at home and marriages under customary and religious laws? Do these digitalized registration systems allow to verify of digital birth certificates, before registering any marriage?

The registration of vital events, including home births and customary marriages, is legally mandatory. The Ethiopian family code equally acknowledges civil, religious, and customary marriage, and the conditions stipulated in the Family Code for the conclusion of marriage apply across the three types of marriage arrangements. Like civil marriage, both customary and religious marriage are to be registered in line with the vital registration system.

The conventional civil registration system only started in 2016 though there were registrations of vital events by municipalities. Now, the government has prioritized it, yet the law is not fully enforced due to various reasons including the infancy of the system and the need for implementation of massive social mobilization and awareness-raising campaigns to enhance service-seeking among the public.

Coming to digitization, Civil Registration, including birth and marriage registration, is predominantly carried out manually/paper-based throughout the country except for some pilot digital registration practices in selected areas.

It is important to note that birth registration certificates, whether digital or manual, are not mandatory/a prerequisite for marriage registration. Consequently, any marriage can be registered without the need for prior registration of birth.

1. What other innovative strategies have been used to address child, early and forced marriage, as well as informal unions and collect data on this practice in your country?

The development and rollout of a community conversation toolkit tailored to humanitarian contexts named Safe Space for Change- an alternative Toolkit for Humanitarian Settings is one of the innovative strategies employed to decrease the vulnerability of girls in the humanitarian context. Undertaking the first-ever trend analysis on child marriage cases to understand the impact of drought has been a new initiative implemented by the programme as part of the UN GPECM programme. The other tested and innovative approach that has shown promising potential has been the use of Sports and Arts Competition for the mobilization of youth and other community members who have played a role in building momentum and contributing mental and psychological health of youth affected by humanitarian contexts. In addition, the use of social media including Telegram and WhatsApp among the new areas getting traction in facilitating the exchange of information and data, learning, and experience among the youth as well as stakeholders at different levels.